

Seasonal Eating
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Watermelon Cools Down the Summer Heat
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Summer heat calls for cool, refreshing dishes that don't require a lot of heat or effort to make. Watermelon in the late summer perfectly fits that bill. Cool, sweet and refreshing, watermelon can be simply chilled and cut into wedges or with little effort involved it can star in summer salads, beverages or desserts. Anyway you serve it, watermelon comes to the forefront in the heat.

Look for watermelons that are not cut or bruised, have a creamy yellow spot on one side and are heavy for their size. Did you know that watermelons are 92% water? That accounts for their thirst quenching power and heaviness.

Because of their sweetness, watermelons actually pair well with more salty and savory ingredients like feta or blue cheese, bitter greens, hot peppers, vinegars and lime juice to help balance out the flavor. This is why many people like to use a little salt on their watermelon. Since they are related to cucumbers, pumpkins and squash, cucumbers are a good pairing with watermelon and make a delicious and unusual salad.



A summer salad of a slab of watermelon topped with vinegar dressed greens, blue cheese and toasted pecans or walnuts makes a great, refreshing lunch or a perfect side to grilled chicken. The watermelon can be cut up and the dressing made and stored in the refrigerator ahead of time. Sometimes olive oil will solidify in the refrigerator, so just set the dressing out at room temperature for a few minutes to warm up and shake well before pouring over the greens. Once assembled, you'll need to serve the salads pretty quickly or they will begin to weep as the salt and vinegar draws the liquid out of the watermelon.

For food safety, make sure you wash the outside of the watermelon with clear running water and a vegetable brush. This will help remove dirt and bacteria that may be on the outside and inadvertently dragged to the inside when you cut it open. Seedless watermelons are a sterile hybrid and may contain some white seed casings that are perfectly edible but don't have the mature black seeds to work around. These are preferable for a salad.

So check out one of the over 300 varieties grown in the U.S. and South America, and serve up some watermelon this month. For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.

Watermelon Arugula Salad

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon Dijon style mustard
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 cup olive oil
12 (1/2" thick) slices seedless watermelon, rind removed
salt
black pepper
1 bag baby arugula
4 ounces crumbled blue cheese
1 cup toasted pecans or walnuts

In a medium bowl, whisk together the vinegars, mustard, sugar, salt and pepper. Slowly drizzle in the oil while whisking. Refrigerate until ready to assemble. Place a slice of watermelon on each serving plate. Sprinkle with a little salt and pepper. In a large bowl toss the arugula with just enough of the balsamic dressing to coat. Sprinkle over the watermelon and top with blue cheese and pecans. Drizzle with a little more dressing and serve immediately.